



# NEWSLETTER



1125 Oilfield Ave  
Shelby, MT 59474

(406) 434-5234 phone  
(406) 434-2718 fax  
[www.fsa.usda.gov/mt](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/mt)

#### Hours

Monday - Friday  
8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

#### County Committee

##### Members:

Connie Alme  
Tim Fenger  
Rob Skryja

#### Next COC Meeting:

**Dec. 8, 2011**  
**at 9:00 A.M.**

#### FSA Office Staff:

Robert Hermance, Ext 107  
Lynda Fretheim, Ext 104  
Rogene Halver, Ext 103  
Carla McNamara, Ext 101  
Dale White, Ext 106

#### Farm Loans call:

(406) 873-5618

Ed Daugherty, Ext 106  
Lacy Roberts, Ext 110

#### NRCS Office Staff:

Misty Vermulm, Ext 110  
Amy Kaiser, Ext 108  
Stacy Thornbrugh, Ext 115

#### Conservation District

##### Board:

Terry Tomsheck  
Steve Ahrens  
Bob Pace  
Roger Smedsrud  
Dick Steinbacher  
Willie Wilson  
Bob Aklestad  
Marlene Moon, Ext 113

#### Reasonable Accommodations:

Persons with disabilities who require accommodations to attend or participate in any FSA programs should contact the County Executive Director at the FSA Office or the Federal Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339.

## TOOLE COUNTY CONNECTION

**FARM SERVICE AGENCY, NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION SERVICE,  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT & EXTENSION SERVICE**

**SEPTEMBER 2011**

### CRP Managed Hay and Grazing

***2011 Managed Grazing Period ended Sept. 13, 2011***

***Managed Haying ends Sept. 30***

The 2011 Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Managed Grazing Period is limited to 60 days - July 16<sup>th</sup> through September 13<sup>th</sup>. All livestock must be removed by Sept. 13, 2011. The Managed Haying Period began on July 16<sup>th</sup> and ends on Sept. 30<sup>th</sup>. All bales must be removed by Nov. 12, 2011. For more information, please contact your local county FSA office. ♣

### Marketing Assistance Loans

A Marketing Assistance Loan (MAL) is available for producers who share in the risk of producing the crop. To be eligible, a producer must maintain continual beneficial interest in the crop from harvest through the earlier of the date the loan is repaid or Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) takes title to the commodity. Beneficial interest means retaining the ability to make decisions about the commodity; responsibility for loss or damage to the commodity; and title to the commodity. Once beneficial interest in a commodity is lost, the commodity is ineligible for loan — even if the producer regains beneficial interest. Commodity loan eligibility requires compliance with conservation and wetland protection requirements; beneficial interest requirements, acreage reporting and ensuring that the commodity meets CCC minimum grade and quality standards. For commodities to be eligible they must have been produced by an eligible producer, be in existence and in a storable condition and be merchantable for food, feed or other uses as determined by CCC. The quality of the commodity in farm storage must be maintained throughout the term of the loan.

Violating provisions of a marketing assistance loan may trigger procedures, such as assessing liquidated damages, calling the loan and denial of future commodity loans. The most common violations are removing or disposing of a commodity being used as loan collateral without prior authorization and providing an incorrect quantity certification. ♣

## 2011 Grain (MAL) Loan Rates

<b>Spring Wheat -</b>	<b>\$3.24</b>
<b>Winter Wheat -</b>	<b>\$3.02</b>
<b>Hard Amber Durum -</b>	<b>\$4.09</b>
<b>Barley -</b>	<b>\$1.87</b>
<b>Oats -</b>	<b>\$1.32</b>

### September Interest Rate = 1.125%

Interest rates for loans disbursed in September through December will remain at that month's rate until January 1, 2012. Then it will change to the January interest rate and remain at that rate until the loan matures.

## Wind Shadow

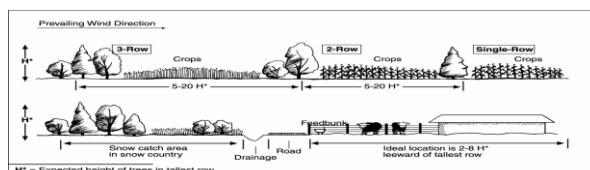
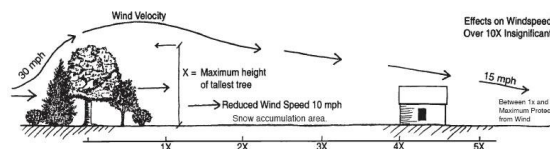
By Stacy Thornbrugh, Soil Conservationist

If you live or farm on the plains, you know the challenges of contending with regular and persistent winds. Problems associated with extreme winds can be alleviated by incorporating trees in to the landscape with a windbreak. Trees create a secluded area also called a wind shadow on the leeward side which can provide a significant area of protection.

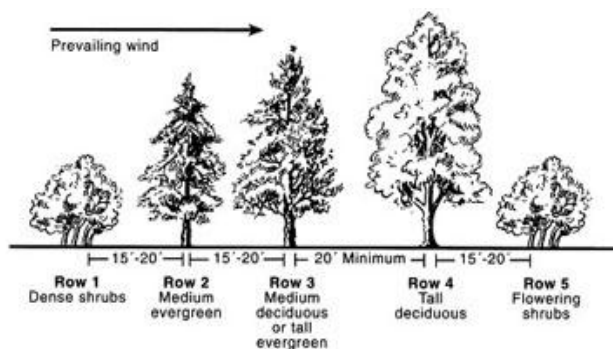
Windbreak/shelterbelts perform a variety of productive functions and can increase property values. The benefits of a windbreak include energy conservation, erosion control, crop, livestock, and structure protection, wildlife habitat, aesthetics, carbon sequestration, reduction in evaporation losses, snow distribution, moderate air and soil temperatures, and the reduction of noise and odors. There are a variety of ways to design a windbreak depending on the purpose or functions you want it to serve. Things to consider are the shape and orientation of the land, wind direction and speed, locations of buildings, roads, ditches, property lines, crops, livestock, and any other features on the landscape, and areas where snow accumulates. Once you decide what you want the windbreak to achieve, you can design the location and layout to meet these objectives.

Key factors in designing a windbreak that meets your needs include orientation, density, height, width, length, spacing, and tree species. The more rows within a windbreak, the more efficient it will

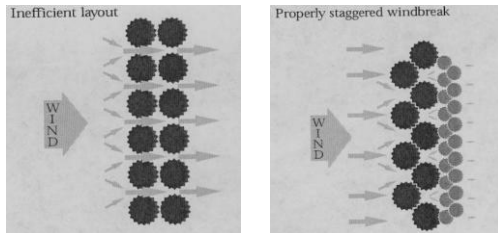
be. The most universal windbreak contains five rows made up of deciduous and evergreen trees and shrubs. Height in a windbreak is the most important factor in determining the downwind distance of protection within the wind shadow.



Width also contributes to the area of protection by providing density through the number of rows. The length and shape should extend beyond the area to be protected to effectively manage wind speed and snow deposition. The arrangement of rows, spacing, and species are critically important to windbreak design and function. Within row spacing will vary depending on the species being planted; however, there are some general guidelines to help ensure windbreak layout is effective. The following diagrams show the general layout of a windbreak from windward to leeward side by tree/shrub type, minimum distances between rows, and the proper way to stagger rows.



Continued on Page 3



When choosing species for your windbreak, it is important to select trees and shrubs that are suitable for your soil types and climate conditions. Your local extension office or conservation agency will be able provide you with a list for tree and shrub selection.

As part of your planning, proper site preparation will greatly improve the survival rate of your newly planted trees and should begin a year in advance. For tillable sites, it is important to break up or destroy vegetation that could compete with your new plantings. If erosion is a concern during the fallow period, planting a small grain crop is recommended. For non-tillable sites such as grass or rangelands, killing competing vegetation through chemical or manual means is suggested.

Planting should take place in early spring or late fall and only when air temperatures are above freezing. When ordering your seedlings, keep in mind planting should be done the same day they arrive or very soon after. Planting can be done by hand or with a tree planting machine and should never be done on a hot windy day.

Once your trees are in the ground, you will want to perform routine maintenance to ensure their survival. Irrigation may be needed if you live in an area that does not receive adequate rainfall. If possible, locating your windbreak near a water source is ideal. The leading cause of failure for new windbreaks is competition from weeds, so weed control is critical. Adequate spacing between trees and rows make mechanical maintenance more feasible and mulching around and between new trees can assist with weed control as well as conserve moisture. Weed control fabric functions as mulch and is often used when planting trees. Inspect your trees regularly for insects and diseases, early detection will allow for early control of a potentially damaging situation. Livestock can destroy a new or older windbreak in a short amount of time and should be kept out at all times. Wildlife, such as small mammals, can also cause damage; however, rodents tend to avoid bare ground, so keeping

vegetation removed between rows and trees can be a deterrent. Protection from browsing deer can include fencing the windbreak until it is established, or tree protectors for individual trees. Naturally, there will be some trees/shrubs that do not survive and it is best to remove and replace them as needed. Proper care and maintenance will help ensure a high rate of tree/shrub survival and a flourishing windbreak.

As your windbreak becomes more established, it is important to keep in mind routine maintenance is crucial to ensure it will be long lived and functional. Ongoing care and maintenance should include watering, pruning, weed control, thinning, and replacement of dead trees or shrubs. Remember, a well planned, designed, and maintained windbreak/shelterbelt will repay you many times over during its lifetime. For more information on planting trees and shrubs for a windbreak, contact your local NRCS or Extension office. ♣

## Disaster Assistance/Risk Management

FSA disaster assistance programs include: Supplemental Revenue Assistance Payments (SURE) Program; Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP); Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP); Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm-Raised Fish (ELAP) and Tree Assistance Program (TAP).

To be eligible for SURE, TAP, and ELAP, producers must purchase, at minimum, catastrophic risk protection insurance for all insurable crops and NAP coverage for non-insurable crops, except grazing. For LFP, grazed acres must be covered. In the case of honey, the term "farm" means all bees and beehives in all counties that are intended to be harvested for a honey crop by the eligible producer. Producers who meet the definition of Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource Producer, or Beginning Farmer or Rancher, do not have to meet this risk management purchase requirement. ♣

## Changing Banks

Almost all Farm Service Agency payments are made electronically using Direct Deposit.

To keep the system running smoothly, it's critical to keep the county office staff up to date on changes you might make in your financial institutions. If you have changed accounts or institutions that might affect the direct deposit of your FSA payments, contact the FSA county office so we can update our files to insure continued uninterrupted service. ♣

## NAP Coverage Deadline for 2012 Crop Year

The Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) was designed to provide financial assistance to producers of non-insurable crops when low yields or prevented planting occurs as the result of natural disasters. Statutes limit NAP coverage to each commercial crop or agricultural commodity, except livestock, for which the catastrophic (CAT) level of insurance is not available.

Application deadlines for 2012 NAP coverage for a variety of crops are coming up in the next few months. In Montana, the NAP sales closing deadlines are: **Sept. 1, 2011**, for value loss crops; **Dec. 1, 2011**, for Honey; **March 15, 2012**, for all other NAP crops.

Producers who choose to obtain NAP coverage for 2012 must file a CCC-471 application for coverage and pay the applicable service fee by the sales closing deadline. Eligible producers must pay a service fee of \$250 per crop per administrative county or \$750 per producer per county, not to exceed \$1875 for a producer with farming interests in multiple counties. Service fees may be waived for limited-resource producers.

For the 2012 crop year it is imperative that producers purchase either NAP or a catastrophic (CAT) level of crop insurance for all insurable and non-insurable crops. This is not only for production coverage, but also for eligibility for the new permanent disaster programs created in the 2008 Farm Bill.

In order for producers to be eligible for assistance under the Supplemental Revenue Assistance (SURE) Program and the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP), and the Tree Assistance Program (TAP), producers must obtain a plan of insurance for each insurable and non-insurable commodity on the farm, **excluding grazing**. To be eligible for assistance under the Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP), producers must obtain either coverage under the Pasture, Rangeland, and Forage Rainfall Index pilot Program offered through crop insurance, or NAP coverage, or both on their grazing. For more information please contact your local Farm Service Agency office. ♣

## 2012 DCP and ACRE Signup

Toole County will begin enrollment for the 2012 Direct and Counter-cyclical Program (DCP) and also the 2012 ACRE Program on Jan. 23, 2012 and will continue through June 1, 2012.

The 2012 DCP & ACRE direct payments program does not provide for an advance payment for the 2012 crop year. Final payments will be issued after October 1, 2012. ACRE is a revenue based payment alternative to the price-based counter-cyclical (CC) payments. Eligible producers will receive direct payments at rates established by statute regardless of market prices. DCP or ACRE contract signatures for enrollment are due by the signup deadline of June 1, 2012. For more information producers can contact their local FSA office. ♣



## Beginning and Limited Resource Farmers

FSA sets aside targeted funding to assist beginning farmers and or members of socially disadvantaged groups to finance agricultural enterprises. Under these designated farm loan programs, FSA can provide financing to eligible applicants through either direct or guaranteed loans. FSA defines a beginning farmer as a person who:

- ☐ Has operated a farm for not more that 10 years
- ☐ Will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm
- ☐ Agrees to participate in a loan assessment, borrower training and financial management program sponsored by FSA
- ☐ Does not own a farm in excess of 30 % of the county's average size.

Additional program information, loan applications, and other materials are available at your local USDA Service Center. You may also visit [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov) ♣



**Montana USDA Agencies Host Women  
Stepping Forward for Agriculture  
Symposium  
Annual Agriculture Symposium Coming  
Oct. 11-13, 2011**

Make plans now to attend the 11<sup>th</sup> annual Women Stepping Forward for Agriculture Symposium at the Pollard Hotel in Red Lodge, Mont., Oct. 11-13, 2011.

Women Stepping Forward for Agriculture provides forums and discussions for women in production farming and ranching. This year's agenda includes an update from USDA agencies in Montana, a panel discussion on the latest in Montana agriculture, a feature about women in ag business in Montana, and a presentation on financial planning and agricultural estate planning. Registration for the symposium is set at \$60 prior to Sept. 26 and \$70 after that date. Registration fees and forms may be sent to Kathy Wiley, P.O. Box 167, Musselshell, MT 59059-0167, [skwiley@live.com](mailto:skwiley@live.com). Checks can be made payable to WSFA. The registration form may be found at any USDA Service Center, by contacting members from any of the sponsor groups listed below, or on the Montana NRCS Web site at [www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov/news/womenag.html](http://www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov/news/womenag.html).

Attendees are encouraged to bring a silent auction item from their local area. The proceeds of the auction are used to support future symposiums. There is also booth space available for your organization or business.

This year's symposium is hosted and sponsored by the following: USDA Food and Agriculture Council, Montana Agri-Women, Montana Cattlewomen, Montana Farm Bureau Women, Women Involved in Farm Economics (WIFE), Montana Beef Council, Ag in Montana Schools, Native Women and Youth in Ag, and the Montana Department of Agriculture.

For more information, contact Lori Valadez, Natural Resources Conservation Service, at 406-587-6969 or [lori.valadez@mt.usda.gov](mailto:lori.valadez@mt.usda.gov) or visit the NRCS Web site at [www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov/news/womenag.html](http://www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov/news/womenag.html).

**Agenda**

**Tuesday, October 11, 2011**

6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. Tour  
Red Lodge Ales and Brewery  
No-host dinner at Sam's Tap Room  
7:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. Registration  
10:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m. Welcome  
Maggie Howley, Montana Agri-Women  
Joyce Swartzendruber, NRCS State Conservationist  
Bruce Nelson, FSA Administrator  
10:15 a.m. – Noon Latest in Montana Agriculture  
Jan French, Montana Department of Livestock  
Rachel Endecott, Montana State University Extension,  
Fort Keogh Livestock and Range Research Laboratory  
Kim Falcon, Montana Wheat and Barley Committee  
Noon – 1:30 p.m. Lunch  
Waded Cruzado, MSU President  
1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. USDA Agencies  
Animal Plant Health Inspection Service, Farm Service  
Agency, National Ag Statistics, Natural Resources  
Conservation Service, Risk Management Agency, Rural  
Development  
3:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. Tradeshow Break  
3:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. Ag in Montana Today  
Aaron Flint, "Voices of Montana," Northern  
Broadcasting System  
4:30 – 5:00 p.m. Wine Business and Wine Pairings  
Yellowstone Cellars and Winery

**Wednesday, October 12, 2011**

5:00 p.m. Social  
Sponsored by: WIFE  
Entertainment by Wiley and the Wild West  
Silent Auction  
7:00 a.m. – 8:00 a.m. Breakfast  
8:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. Motivational Speaker  
Erin Slivka, Raising Country Kids  
9:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. Tradeshow Break  
10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Women in Ag Business  
Kristi Pettis, Local Livestock Media Group  
Sarah Calhoun, Red Ants Pants  
11:00 a.m. – Noon Cooking Demonstration  
Hotel chef  
Noon – 1:00 p.m. Lunch  
1:00 p.m. – 1:45 p.m. Financial Planning  
Gwen Padden, Field Advantage  
1:45 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. Agricultural Estate Planning  
Kristin Gustafson-Juras, University of Montana  
2:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. Wrap-up and Evaluations  
Adjournment - Thank you attendees, speakers and  
sponsors. ♣

## John and Bonnie Wiegand Chosen Conservationists of the Year

*By Misty Vermulm, NRCS District Conservationist*

Wiegand Family Wheat Farm Inc., operated by John and Bonnie Wiegand, has been raising small grains since 1984. As John took over the farming, a management decision he made was to go to a no-till operation. After approximately 13 years, he can still appreciate the benefits to his farmland, as well as his time and labor savings.

John has demonstrated himself as a leader in adopting conservation on the land. In addition to being a long time no-till operator, he follows a cropping pattern that regularly incorporates legumes into his rotation, resulting in excellent soil health. He is deliberate at re-cropping, which has helped curb salinity concerns in his fields as well as helping to further reduce soil erosion in this notoriously windy region. Along with re-cropping, he has identified the most troublesome seeps that could not be handled with re-cropping alone, and seeded grass/alfalfa mixes into the recharge areas, and in the seeps themselves, establishing salt tolerant grasses. He pays careful attention to his land and it is this attention that keeps his operation sustainable and flourishing. Part of that attention to detail involves having GPS'd locations of Canada Thistle and clearing a patch of spotted knapweed in the railroad right-of-way. He also utilizes GPS for variable rate fertilizer applications to improve yields, saving inputs.

John has a concern for wildlife, seeding areas through the SAFE CRP wildlife initiative, with a mixture that provides nesting as well as winter cover for upland game birds. He makes decisions for the good of the land and wildlife, utilizing available assistance along the way. This juggling act between production and conservation sums up John's overall management and the land reflects this diligence. It is these qualities that the Toole County Conservation District recognized and selected him as the Conservationist of the Year for 2010. ♣



## Farm Storage Facility Loan Program

FSA's Farm Storage and Facility Loan (FSFL) Program provides low-interest financing for producers of eligible commodities to build or upgrade farm storage and handling facilities. The maximum principal amount of a loan through FSFL is \$500,000.

Participants are required to provide a down payment of 15 percent, with Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) providing a loan for the remaining eighty five (85) percent of the net cost of the eligible storage facility and permanent drying and handling equipment. Loan terms of seven, ten, or twelve years are available depending on the amount of the loan.

Interest rates for each term rate may be different and are based on the rate which CCC borrows from the Treasury Department. Payments are available in the form of a partial disbursement and the remaining final disbursement. A partial disbursement of up to 50 percent of the total loan amount will be available, if desired, after a portion of the construction has been completed. The final disbursement will be made when all construction is completed.

An FSFL generally must be approved before the deliveries of any materials are accepted and before any site preparation or construction is begun. The following commodities are eligible for farm storage facility loans: corn, grain sorghum, soybeans, oats, wheat, barley, or minor oilseeds harvested as whole grain; corn, grain sorghum, wheat, oats, or barley harvested as other than whole grain; hay; renewable biomass; fruits (including nuts) and vegetables—cold storage facilities. Among other requirements, borrowers are responsible for obtaining annual multi-peril crop insurance or NAP coverage and all-peril insurance on the FSFL structure listing CCC as the loss payee. For more information, contact the county FSA office. ♣



## EURASIAN WATERMILFOIL – GET TO KNOW IT...COME TO FEAR IT

*By Jim Ghekiere, Liberty Co. Weed Supervisor*

Anglers, boaters, and anyone dependent upon Montana's waters for their livelihood and recreation, be aware! The dreaded invasive plant Eurasian watermilfoil (EWM) is no longer a stranger to our state. An aggressive aquatic plant, EWM has infested the waters of Washington and Idaho for many years. It was declared a noxious weed by the state of Montana in 2003, and was first found in the Cabinet Gorge and Noxon Reservoir waters of western Montana in 2007. Late in the summer of 2010, it was found in six more sites in our state, including the Missouri River drainage and Fort Peck Reservoir.

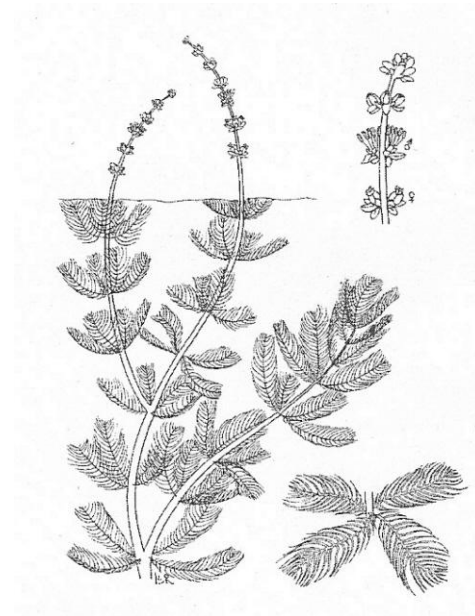
The threat EWM poses to our aquatic and riparian environments is very real. It is paramount that anglers, boaters and all recreationists are able to identify this plant and prevent its spread to other bodies of water. Understanding the plant's method of spreading and the simple prevention practices recreationists can use, such as boat inspection, washing and sanitation of equipment and gear, will prevent it from becoming a widespread nuisance.

A dense and vigorous stand of EWM prevents fish and other lake dwellers from using the water, inhibits or prevents boating and can even pose a drowning hazard to swimmers. It is a difficult plant to control once it becomes established. EWM generally becomes established near boat ramps and other high-use areas as it is nearly always spread by boaters.

Aquatic weeds are difficult to control. Herbicide use in waterways requires very careful planning as there are many ways these products can have adverse effects on other plants and other water uses, such as irrigation. Other methods of controlling aquatic weeds include hand pulling or bottom covers, which are physical barriers on the bottom of the waterway. These methods of weed control are very expensive and labor intensive. Due to the challenges associated with controlling EWM, prevention is the simplest and cheapest way to manage this in our local waterways.

The Marias River Basin Weed Control Association is planning a series of free informational meetings for anglers, recreationists

and the public to be held this spring in Havre, Shelby and Fort Benton. The Havre meeting will be April 26 at 7 p.m. in the BLM Office Meeting Room. The Shelby meeting will be May 3 at 7 p.m. in the Marias River Electric Meeting room, and the meeting in Fort Benton will be May 4 at 2 p.m. in the EOC building. The primary focus of these meetings will be to enlist the help of local sportsmen and the public to keep the Marias Watershed, Lake Elwell and other local waters free of EWM. These meetings are being sponsored by the local Conservation Districts, MSU County Extension offices and the County Weed District offices. For more information about EWM or the upcoming meetings, contact any of the sponsoring organizations or the Hill County Weed Department at 265-4453, the Chouteau County Extension office at 622-3751 or the Toole County Extension office at 424-8350.



### Eurasian Water Milfoil FAQ's

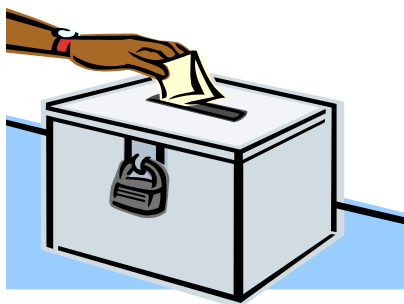
1. What is Eurasian Watermilfoil? It is an extremely aggressive, non-native water weed. It crowds out native plants and forms thick, floating mats on the surface of the water that make boating, fishing and swimming almost impossible.
2. What does it look like? It's a submersed, rooted perennial plant with smooth stems that branch near the water surface. This branching can form large, floating mats of vegetation on the surface of lakes, rivers and other water

*Continued on Page 8*

bodies, preventing light from reaching native aquatic plants.

The leaves of Eurasian watermilfoil are feathery and occur around the stem. Each leaf is 1/2 to 2 inches long, with 12 to 21 pairs of fine, thin leaflets. The leaves rarely extend above the water surface and will collapse around the stem when removed from the water. The upper portion of the plant often develops a reddish color.

3. The flower is a spike which is often pink or red. It is held above the water during flowering from June to September.
4. Why is it a Problem? Once introduced into a river or lake, Eurasian Water Milfoil rapidly forms thick mats that make swimming, boating and fishing difficult. It can cause drowning by tangling swimmers in the thick beds; alters rivers and lakes by choking out native plants, thus harming fish and wildlife habitat and clogs irrigation intake pipes and hinders power generation. ♣



## County Committee Elections

Producers whose major farming operation is north of the Oilmont/Kevin Highway can be watching your mailboxes for the official county office committee election ballot starting early next month. Ballots will be mailed to all eligible voters starting on November 4, 2011. If, for some reason, you don't receive a ballot, please notify the county FSA office. The nominees this year are Chad Taylor and Luanne Wallewein.

Completed and signed ballots will be due back in the county office by the close of business on December 5, 2011. Ballots will be counted at the FSA office on December 8<sup>th</sup>. ♣

## Succession in Interest changes must be reported by Sept. 30

If you have made any changes that affect your interest in base acres since you signed your last Direct and Counter-cyclical Program contract, you must report these *successions-in-interest* to the county committee by Sept. 30, so that a final determination can be made on who is eligible for the program on the farm.

Changes that qualify as a succession-in-interest include:

- A sale of land
- A change of operator or producer, including a increase or decrease in the number of partners
- A foreclosure, bankruptcy or involuntary loss of the farm.
- A change in producer shares to reflect changes in the producer's share of the crop(s) that were originally approved on the contract.

If a succession-in-interest has taken place, you, as the "predecessor," are required to refund any advance DCP payments you received for the affected base acres before a payment can be made to the "successor."

Not reporting a succession-in-interest can result in contract termination and a loss of program benefits for all producers involved. ♣

## Acreage Spot Check Determinations and Notification

Each year the Farm Service Agency is required to complete spot checks of acreage reports. Acreage reports are an integral part of farm program participation. Acreage spot checks are completed to ensure accurate acreage reports are used in farm program computations.

FSA will conduct spot checks on a nationally selected number of producers in each state. All acreage determinations will be determined using the FSA maps containing Geographic Information System official acreages.

After farms are spot checked, a FSA-468 "Notice of Determined Acreage" will be sent to the farm operator. Questions concerning determined acres should be directed to your local FSA office for further explanation. ♣



## Pesticide Container Recycling Program Available

The Toole County Weed Department is participating in the Pesticide Container Recycling Program sponsored by the Montana Department of Agriculture.

The program was created to keep pesticide container plastic out of Montana's landfills. Producers are encouraged to drop off pesticide containers at predetermined collection sites, but to do this some container preparation is required.

Only #2 high density polyethylene (HDPE) plastic containers will be accepted and these must be triple rinsed or power rinsed by the owner  
Remove the lid and foil liner  
Remove the label booklets  
Remove the rubber gaskets and metal handle  
Properly cut the container. Five gallon containers must be cut in half vertically. Thirty and fifty-five gallon drums must be cut in half vertically and then each half cut into three pieces.

### Why should you recycle?

Recycled plastics are converted into practical and useful products such as fence posts, pallets, field drain tiles, speed bumps, decorative fence and parking stops.

Plastics require 100 to 1,000 years to breakdown in a landfill

Producing new plastic products from recycled material uses two-thirds of the energy required to manufacture products from raw materials

Recycling plastic containers helps protect Montana's natural resources.

For further information, check out the website at [www.agr.mt.gov](http://www.agr.mt.gov) or contact the Toole County Weed Department (Val at 434-2742) for collection times and site locations.

Recycling is a win-win situation for everybody!

### AREA SCHEDULING Subject to change

TOWN	LOCATION	DATES
Great Falls	Weed Shop	10/17 - 11/21
Conrad	Custom Crop Care	10/18

Valier	Landfill	10/18
Shelby	Co. Weed Shop; Taylor Hardware	10/18
Galata	Fraser Oil	10/18
Chester	Co. Weed Shop	10/18

Contact your local weed department for additional sites. ♣

### Don't waste your energy...

*By: Misty Vermulm*

Have you ever trudged to the top of your stairs only to forget what you came upstairs for, then have to retrace your steps to remember what you were going to get? None of us like wasting our energy, and globally the US is becoming much more energy conscious. Here at the Natural Resources Conservation Service, an adequate energy supply is one of our strategic goals and becoming integral to the agricultural and conservation planning that we do. We have always sought to conserve our natural resources like soil, water, air, plants, and animals and now in conjunction, we are becoming more aware of the energy utilized in these conservation activities.

Agriculture production consumes a great deal of energy such that slight changes can mean large impacts to the conservation of energy. The US, with only 5% of the world population consumes about 25% of the world's oil supply, which is mostly supplied by imports from other countries, many of which are politically unstable. This risk along with the rising costs of energy, make energy efficiency and conservation an important concern for farms and ranches as they seek to make a profit on the goods they produce.

The NRCS is continually seeking to advance and support the development of biofuels and alternative energy sources such as solar and wind. However, we may have a better role in promoting activities and practices that increase the efficiency of the energy that is used over the course of producing an ag product. Here are some energy saving opportunities to consider for your farm and ranch:

- Switching from older, inefficient engines to newer more fuel efficient engines

*Continued on Page 10*

- Maintaining pumps, fans, and motors for optimal performance
- Adopting conservation tillage practices
- Improved efficiency of irrigation methods
- Utilizing intensive grazing systems where appropriate
- Precision farming techniques to increase efficiency of each operation / pass made over a field and reduce overlap
- Windbreak/shelterbelt plantings that can reduce energy costs in homes by up to 25% or increase crop yields by 5 – 20%

Many of these are self explanatory as to the energy savings that can be obtained. A couple items worth discussing further are the different grazing systems as well as the precision farming techniques.

Grazing systems developed to leave forage standing and eliminate the harvesting and feeding of hay are being touted for the energy savings that they can have. Along with this is the concept of altering calving / lambing seasons to coincide with peak forage growth of an area. Behind this is the premise that allowing the lactating mothers to harvest their own feed during their peak nutritional needs reduces the energy needed to harvest the hay and then get that feed to them.

As for precision farming techniques, some of the GPS technologies can vastly improve operation efficiency by reducing overlap from feet to inches, possibly even reducing the number of passes that a piece of equipment has to make across a field. The precision fertilizer and variable rate fertilizer methods also amount to significant energy savings. Tailoring fertilizer application makes good agronomic sense and cents, but also when considering that fertilizer costs can typically make up 30% of the energy costs for crop production, little changes can make big differences.

Interestingly, much of the energy ‘costs’ are a result from the process of actually making the fertilizer. The steps needed to convert the nutrients into a usable form have extremely high energy inputs, all of which occur before the product ever reaches your farm. This makes a strategic plan for applying fertilizer beneficial to not just the crop yield and fertilizer cost investment, but also to the efficiency of the energy inputs.

Historically agriculture had very significant gains in energy efficiencies up until 1990, but those have leveled off since then. The 2007 Energy Act established the goal of 36 billion gallons of biofuel production annually by 2022. The production of biofuels as an alternative to fossil fuels is increasing dramatically and will be agriculture’s opportunity to make strides in contributing to the energy needs of our nation. Solar and wind energy are also being developed and harnessing techniques improved for utilizing these sources. These green energy sources, particularly wind, are largely located on our agricultural lands.

Even with the advancements in these renewable energy sources, our reliance on fossil fuels is significant and as such we cannot afford to waste our energy. It all adds up, so each seemingly-small change an individual farm or ranch makes to impact energy use will benefit the overall energy needs of the country. Along the way, the energy savings will also impact the bottom line as input costs are reduced. And that is always a great incentive to make a change. ♣



## Order Trees In The Fall

*By: Marlene Moon*

There is no better time to think about ordering trees for your windbreaks, shelterbelts or for replacement stock than right now. Placing a fall order with your local Extension office or Conservation District will provide a larger selection of stock and a variety of sizes...from conservation grade to mature plants up to 6 feet tall! Early ordering will also give you time to prepare your planting area so when the trees arrive in mid- April, you’ll be ready!

For more information on varieties available, contact your local Extension office (Shelby, 424-8350) or the Toole County Conservation District (434-5234, ext. 113). ♣

## Stripe Rust, Weathering the Perfect Storm

Joe T. Broesder, MSU Hill County Extension Agent

Many agriculture producers in the Golden Triangle were reintroduced to stripe rust for the first time in many years during the 2010-11 cropping season. The fungal infection hit hard and fast due to the level of infection provided by the extended green bridge last fall followed by the November snowfall that persisted through the winter to provide protection for the disease to start spreading infection this spring. Add to that a long cool, wet period this spring and you have all the conditions stripe rust needs to flourish.

For stripe rust or any other disease to thrive, three factors must be present for an infection to occur. The disease organism must be present, there needs to be a susceptible host, and there must be the favorable environmental conditions in the presence of the first two factors. Let's explore these one at a time.

Stripe rust survives most winters in the Pacific Northwest because of their mild winters and presence of actively growing wheat plants. Green tissue is required for the fungus to survive and reproduce. Disease survival in these regions provides the source of infection for Western Montana and the High Plains east of the Rocky Mountains every year due to wind currents. Last fall, infections were present in Montana and because of the persistent snow cover on unfrozen soil we had a local overwintering rust population. This fills out the first leg of the disease triangle, presence of the disease organism.

There are many types of rust that infect agricultural crops around the world. One of these is stripe rust or *Puccinia striiformis* f. sp. *tritici* which is specific to wheat and some grasses, the second leg of our disease triangle. Other forms of this fungus impact barley, rye and many other grass species. Many wheat varieties have resistance genes for stripe rust. However, stripe rust is very resilient and is continually changing to overcome this resistance. There have been more than 109 races of stripe rust identified in the United States and they all have the ability to impact a wheat crop. We do not have all of these races in Montana, but they are constantly mutating. Even so, one of the best tools we have to fight rust is host plant resistance. Many wheat varieties have multiple genes for resistance. This allows tolerance against multiple strains of the

disease. Varieties with at least moderate resistance should be planted as your first line of defense. Some Montana varieties with known resistance include Bynum, Judee (available only as foundation seed), Rampart and Yellowstone. Moderately resistant varieties include Carter, Jerry, Ledger and Vanguard. For a more complete listing of winter wheat and spring wheat varieties please refer to <http://plantsciences.montana.edu/crops/> for the most current winter and spring wheat crop summaries or visit your local MSU Extension Office for a copy. Though these and many other varieties are listed with some resistance, remember that the rust organism is continually changing and many of these cultivars were overwhelmed by this disease last spring.

MSU Extension Plant Pathologist Dr. Mary Burrows recommends that you check with neighbors to determine if one variety may have held up better than others in your area. This is important because we may have had several strains of the fungus infecting different regions of the state. This pathogen is windborne and moves quickly, so keeping ahead of the variation in strains is a constant moving target. Fortunately we have numerous tools available to combat this disease.

Your next line of defense should be a quality seed treatment. Seed treatments containing a strobilurin and/or a triazole will offer protection for 2-3 weeks this fall. According to Dr. Burrows in her August 22, 2011 MSU Ag Alert, stripe rust spores will be present on the grain. These spores are essentially dead and are safe to feed. Stripe rust is NOT residue or soil borne so spores dusting the ground do not pose a threat to the following crop. Disease transmission will occur from green volunteer crop and grassy weeds like foxtail barley. As Burrows states, this is a classic green bridge pathogen.

Seed from affected fields may have lower test weight and potentially lower germination. Washington State University scientist Dr. X.M. Chen, (Can. J. Plant Pathol. 27: 314-337, 2005) states that seed produced from crops damaged by stripe rust have low vigor and thus poor emergence after germination. This is probably due to lower test weight and shriveled kernels. The take home message from this information is that if you save your own seed have it conditioned and conduct a

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germination test. If you are still concerned, increase your seeding rate to compensate for decreased vigor. This could impact winter hardiness.

The third leg of our disease triangle is environment. Strip rust requires cooler weather than leaf rust and stem rust and tends to have a more dramatic economic impact when infection occurs. The optimum temperature for infection to occur is about 45 [degrees](#) °F. There is some indication that newer strains of stripe rust may be adapting to a wider temperature range and could cause infection at slightly higher temperatures. They are also more aggressive than 'older' strains of stripe rust and cause more disease across a broader temperature range. The other environmental factor is moisture. With the return of fall rains we increase the likelihood of creating the cool damp environment required by stripe rust. Spores from stripe rust must have 3-6 hours of continuous moisture to germinate and infect the leaf. So, damp cool nights could bring this disease back this fall.

Winter survival is temperature dependant. Literature suggests that sustained temperatures below 14 [degrees F](#) °-will stop disease development. The situation we encountered last winter was snowfall before the soil froze and the snow stayed through the winter. This created a blanket of insulation that allowed the disease to overwinter on winter wheat that was still green. We also had a lot of wind this spring that moved spores from other overwintering areas.

To summarize, we have susceptible wheat varieties grown in Montana. Many of our varieties have some resistance to stripe rust but not all of them. Stripe rust is always changing so producers must choose varieties wisely and we must continue to develop new resistant varieties. The disease is present on green plant tissue including some grasses like foxtail barley and late season spring wheat so we are at risk of reinfection via the green bridge. Manifestation of the diseases on new winter wheat planting will depend upon the weather. If we have extended cool damp conditions, we could have disease issues. It will become critical to break the green bridge by not seeding too early. Other critical management practices include treating seed that has been

conditioned and germination tested and selecting a variety that has at least moderate disease resistance. Dr. Burrows is anticipating we will have another run of stripe rust in the spring of 2012. As such she suggests that you plan on making a full rate fungicide application if conditions and economics warrant in the spring. This can be done with your normal herbicide application.

You can stay up to date on disease and insect issues by periodically checking the MSU Ag Alerts at [msuextension.org](http://msuextension.org). In the upper right hand corner you will find the current Ag Alert link. Clicking on the link provides you access to all of the current Ag Alerts. If you would like to receive updated alerts as they occur, you can register your email at the site. You may also receive AgAlerts by fax by contacting Mary Burrows directly. (ph: 994-7766; fax: 994-7600).



### **Foreign Persons Must Report U.S. Agricultural Land Holdings**

Foreign persons with an interest in agricultural lands in Montana are required to report their holdings and any transactions to the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture. "Any foreign person who acquires, transfers or holds any interest, other than a security interest, in agricultural land in the United States is required by law to report the transaction no later than 90 days after the date of the transaction with the FSA county office. Failure to file a report, filing a late report or filing an inaccurate report can result in a penalty with fines up to 25 percent of the fair market value of the agricultural land," Deschamps said. For AFIDA purposes, agricultural land is defined as any land used for farming, ranching or timber production, if the tracts total 10 acres or more.

Disclosure reports are also required when there are changes in land use. For example, reports are required when land use changes from nonagricultural to agricultural or from agricultural to nonagricultural. Foreign investors must also file a report when there is a change in the status of ownership to or from a foreign owner or between foreign owners. ♣



## Shakin' In Their Stems

By: Misty Vermulm

Leafy spurge plants are shakin' in their stems these days at the Tumbleweed Ranch along the Toole/Pondera county line. The owners, Ernie and Shirley Habets and their son Jeff have just released 11 large, beefy, highly trained and mobile soldiers in their War on Weeds. Their cows were recently trained using a technique developed by Kathy Voth of Livestock for Landscapes (visit [livestockforlandscapes.com](http://livestockforlandscapes.com) for more information). Using these methods, she has successfully trained cows to consume a variety of weeds, including many common to our area: spotted knapweed, leafy spurge, Canada thistle, and whitetop.



*Jeff Habets observes his cows during the initial step of conditioning them that the feed bunk contains good eats.*

The principles behind the success of the technique relate to grazing behavior of livestock, behavior that strikes many of us as strangely familiar. Let's take a look. Cows, like people are neophobic. No need to feel insulted - neophobic merely means we are afraid of new things. Ever eaten escargot or rattlesnake meat? Me neither. Ok, I know it won't kill me, but for now I'll stick with my burger and fries. With grazing animals they need this trait of not trying the unknown for survival – just in case a plant is acutely or fatally poisonous. Before trying the unknown, they need some sort of 'encouragement' whether in the form of starvation (not the preferred way) or having it introduced to their diet for them in a trusted manner (preferred for this trial). Or how about this one - how many times do you have to put asparagus in front of a 3 year old before they will even try it. By the time they do try it, it's cold and doesn't taste that great anyway. With cows – if they try it at all, they might wait till the plants have matured,

dried, or are woody beyond being palatable. Another behavior: Mom isn't crazy about spinach, never eats it, never serves it - so junior consequently doesn't either. If mama cow doesn't ever eat thistle, neither will her calf, that is until she has a sleepover at Marcie's pasture and sees Marcie and her Mom chowing down. Here's another principle to consider. Ever experienced too much of a good thing? Remember back to that summer when you were 8 and those cherries tasted so yummy. There may have been some painful consequences. Wait – cherries are good for you right - but too many had bad results. This principle can also factor into livestock grazing. All plants have toxins, think of alfalfa and bloat, yet the mixing of feeds can mitigate the negative consequences of those toxins – allowing greater intake of certain feedstuffs. Next, ever pondered the idea: Can you teach an old dog new tricks? Well sure it *is* possible, but is it worth the effort, might just be better to get a pup. My kids love Airheads and Fun Dips – two kinds of candy that are not familiar to me. I'm more of an M&M or Lifesaver generation and do not even consider the Fun Dips (aka sugar on a sugar stick) to be food. I tried them, but I don't choose them. The same trait can be observed in an old cow. She knows what she likes, and where she's going to go to eat it. You might be able to herd her to a new spot with new plants but it takes some effort and she'll still not *choose* to go there or eat that. From the Habets' herd, there were 13 head chosen for the training program. We forged ahead with the training, despite knowing that spurge is one of the most challenging weeds to get cows to eat. Spotted Knapweed and Canada Thistle are more readily eaten than spurge and this is often attributed to the sticky, milky latex liquid in the stems and leaves. However, each of these weeds has similar nutritional value as that of alfalfa. Regardless, spurge is the weed the Habets battle, so spurge had to be our target weed. Besides as Kathy Voth likes to say: 'it's easier to train cows to eat weeds, than it is to get a cow man to raise sheep or goats'. Of the herd, two of them will be cut from the program (one was a steer and one was a free martin heifer – both en-route to the dinner table). In classic Murphy's Law fashion, these two were a couple of the most cooperative at taking to eating the spurge. Ten of them were recently ultrasound checked and

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confirmed as bred heifers. Being young, they are more receptive to new things and being bred, they will be equipped to pass along their foraging skills to their calves. There was one old cow in the bunch. She seemed less cooperative but was definitely influenced by the peer pressure of the younger herd mates.



Twice a day we had those girls (and boy) literally racing to the bunk after we'd poured in the feed and opened the gate. Old Cow (she was #1 incidentally - just ask her) mostly followed the streaking youngsters, but at the bunk she shoved to the front and ate her fill – at least of the good stuff.

As we began feeding the spurge, she tried it right along with the rest at least the first couple feedings. Our first feeding of weeds, we indiscriminately cut big bunches of spurge. It was sprayed with a molasses and they all tried it but seemed to then look at us accusingly as if to ask “where’s the real food”. Hours after this first feeding of weeds, they had left a lot of the spurge in the trough but we noticed that it was mainly the older, larger, flowered stems. We were careful to harvest only younger, more succulent spurge plants for the afternoon. This time it was fed sans molasses, they still charged to the bunk and began eating, although less eagerly. After a moment, several paused and looked at us expectantly then walked up to us at the edge of the pen to smell our empty buckets for something better. We made note of those that stayed at the bunk and did seem to relish and eat the most spurge. And yes, two of those were the steer and the freemartin heifer that will not be turned out to pasture. While the unimpressed ones gathered around us, we were still encouraged as one of the heifers idly picked at a

spurge plant growing right in the corral. For the most part though, they lacked enthusiasm toward the handpicked meal. With that, we left and returned the next morning to find that virtually all of those young spurge plants had ended up getting eaten. We fed spurge one additional time in the bunks and by now they seemed to be on to us. They stood around the bunk nosing for something else. One of our star pupils from the day before, #175 humored us enough to take a large mouthful of spurge and eagerly eat it, but after which they all just stood there seeming to be waiting for us to feed them real food. While they may not have come to love it, they have learned that spurge is food. For the Habets, they have spurge interspersed in their pastures. Ideally, it would be best to have electric fenced the test herd onto a small concentrated patch of spurge for several days to allow them to practice eating the weed themselves. However, practically speaking, the spurge infested coulees of the Marias River are not that conducive to electric fencing and confinement. These gals will join their herd mates and be exposed to the spurge throughout their pastures. This is now a familiar plant and any use, even the slightest amount, is going to be more than before. The hope is that they will influence the rest of the herd as well as their offspring to eventually increase the spurge use even further. This arsenal combined with the flea beetles, caterpillars, and chemical control efforts all contribute to the Habets attempt to keep the spurge at bay - at the very least.



*This is one of the many caterpillars we observed – a Hawk Moth (*Hyles euphorbiae*) which feeding on the Habets spurge plants. They help to keep the weeds in check but do not kill the plants. An integrated approach using this type of biological control, along with the new grazing strategy, as well as chemical control is the best defense in fighting weed invasions.*

The Toole County Conservation District sponsored this trial project and is open to supporting additional projects in Toole County, particularly on other weed species. Jeannie Olmstead, MSU Extension; Stacy Thornbrugh and Misty Vermulm with NRCS; were the grunts behind the project. There are many others who are conducting similar training sessions and having success. This technique holds potential to be an invaluable tool for ranchers to turn their cows into weed managers and their weeds into a source of forage. Despite skepticism, we'd encourage anyone with weeds to consider this method. If you are fighting a weed that hasn't been mentioned or tested, always investigate and make sure you are not training your animals to eat something that could poison them.

It should be noted that in this scenario, spreading weed seeds through the animals is less of an issue since the pastures are infested already. Seed viability after passing through the rumen varies for different weed species. As noted earlier, weeds are most palatable early in their growth prior to seed set, and it would be advantageous to producers that are able to strategically graze weed infested pastures early in the season. In cases where a weed infested pasture cannot be grazed until later in the season when weeds have produced seed, it is a good idea to dry-lot animals when going from infested pastures to weed-free areas. Whether the seeds hitch a ride in the rumen or on the hide, this can reduce their spread. So often with weeds it is not about eliminating their presence, but at least slowing their spread.

In the meantime, as our Black Angus gals, armed and dangerous, head for the Marias River coulees – those spurge plants are shakin' in their stems. In fact, I think I just saw one leak a little latex. ♣

## **Lending a Hand for Conservation Efforts**

*By: Amy Kaiser, Soil Conservation Technician*

For over 75 years, the Natural Resources Conservation Service has been lending a hand to local farmers and ranchers for their conservation efforts on privately owned land. If you didn't already know, the NRCS is a federally funded agency and regulated by environmental laws and legislation including the 1995-2008 Farm Bills, Highly

Erodible Lands/Wetland Conservation, Clean Water Act, among many others. Those involved in agriculture can voluntarily apply for financial and technical assistance to conserve natural resources on privately owned land. Pastureland, crop land, grazing land, hay land, animal feeding operations, and wildlife are common Toole County Land Uses which utilize conservation programs to improve natural resources.

Conservation programs, authorized by the current 2008 Farm Bill, are made available to producers to identify different resource concerns. The most utilized programs in Toole County include the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program, and the Conservation Stewardship Program. All of these programs offer engineering, vegetative and management practices to control conservation efforts toward soil, water, air, plants, animals, humans and energy resources.

EQIP, Environmental Quality Incentives Program, can assist with developing Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans for animal feeding operations, assist in the planning of Precision Ag methods for nutrient application in cropland, support development of better utilization of range land through Prescribed Grazing plans, or you may choose from the many other conservation options available with this program. EQIP also allows operators to utilize a qualified Technical Service Provider for assistance with planning, designing, and implementation of conservation practices.

The Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) offers opportunities to producers who want to develop and improve wildlife habitat on agricultural land. This may include protection, restoration, and development of declining or important aquatic wildlife species' habitat. WHIP also promotes conservation plans to reduce the impact to fish and wildlife habitat from invasive species.

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CStP) encourages producers to address resource concerns in a comprehensive manner by undertaking additional conservation activities. This also includes improving, maintaining, and managing existing conservation activities.

Funding for these incentive programs originates from the taxpayers' critical federal investments. These investments support clean air, clean and

## Endangered Species

By: Amy Kaiser, Soil Conservation Technician

abundant water, productive soils, and healthy plant and animal communities. To apply for any of these incentive programs you must meet minimum eligibility qualifications which may include showing proof for control of land during the length of the agricultural practice, providing tax forms for present years showing an agricultural income, and meeting conservation resource concerns. All information that is submitted to the USDA is confidential and protected under the Privacy Act of 1974.

Our mission statement is **HELPING PEOPLE HELP THE LAND**. Our vision is Productive Lands – Healthy Environment. The NRCS strives to protect private agricultural land for future generations. A shared goal by many of the farmers and ranchers we work with. We would like to continue to lend a hand, for more information about programs that can assist you, visit <http://www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov/about/> ♣

### Receiving the Toole County Newsletter by Email

Are you interested in receiving the Toole County Newsletter by email? The office has compiled a list of producers that are receiving a monthly newsletter by email. If you would like to be added to the list, please contact Rogene by phone or email at [rogene.halver@mt.usda.gov](mailto:rogene.halver@mt.usda.gov).

In addition to these newsletters, you will continue to receive the Toole County Connections which is mailed quarterly. If any of the individuals already on the list have any problems opening the attachment, etc., please let us know.

OR

access Montana Farm Service Agency news and program deadlines online @ [www.fsa.usda.gov/mt](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/mt)

Montana Farm Service Agency's County Newsletters are available online! You can view and download your county's most recent newsletter on the Montana FSA Website at: [www.fsa.usda.gov/mt](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/mt) - just click on Newsletters. Montana's farmers, ranchers and agriculture partners can view important Montana FSA program deadlines and news and sign up to receive email and/or RSS messages as soon as Montana news releases are issued. If you are interested in replacing the hard copy of the county newsletters with the online version, please contact your local county office for arrangements. ♣

An endangered species is a population of organisms which is at risk of becoming extinct because it is either few in numbers, or threatened by changing environmental or predation parameters. Just under half of all known organism species are considered endangered. But only a few will gain public awareness and obtain the needed protection. Often minute or simple changes can make a difference. Today, federal and state agencies are trying to ensure steps are taken to prevent plant and animal species from extinction.

Many nations have laws offering protection to conserve dependent species which includes forbidding hunting, restricting land development and creating preserves. The Endangered Species Act of 1973 is one of the dozens of US laws designed to protect critical species from extinction. This act is administered by two federal agencies, the US Fish & Wildlife Service and the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration.

All counties in Montana are monitored and provide residence to species on the Endangered, Threatened, Proposed and Candidate Species List. There are currently two species listed in Toole County: the Black-footed Ferret, listed as endangered; and the Sprague's pipit, listed as a candidate. Both of these species are endemic to North America's short grassed prairielands and are capable of surviving in drought locations as long as their specific habitat elements are present in prairie grassland.

The black-footed ferret (*Mustela nigripes*) is a masked critter that lives in prairie dog towns. They are completely dependent upon prairie dog colonies for survival. Loss in numbers is due to habitat destruction, poisoning, shooting, and exotic diseases. In 1986 only 18 ferrets remained, but today they are making a comeback with approximately 750 living in the wild and 250 living in captivity. The black footed ferret is in the weasel family and can be identified by black legs and feet, black tipped tail and a black mask across the eyes.

The Sprague's pipit (*Anthus spragueii*), since identified in 1843, has suffered from severe population decline associated with the loss of prairies from cultivation, overgrazing, and

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invasion by exotic plant species. This small passerine bird is found in well-drained, open grasslands and fields. It is distinguished from other passerines by the characteristic slender shape, relatively narrow bill, and thin, high pitched calls and songs of pipits.

NRCS utilizes the Endangered, Threatened, Proposed and Candidate Species List and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents as a guide in resource planning for all Farm Bill Programs including EQIP, WHIP, and CSP to determine the probable impact toward wildlife and wildlife habitats from practices that may be established through Farm Bill incentives.

There are a few simple conservation practices that landowners can improve to help native species from extinction. These include seeding hilltops and reseeding saline seeps; refrain from sod-busting hilltops, odd shaped fields, and undisturbed areas; use flush bars on equipment; and consider using no-till equipment.

If you are interested in identifying other listed species, the following site will lead you to more information.

<http://www.fws.gov/montanafieldoffice/> ♣

### Important Dates to Remember:

<b>Sept 30 -</b>	2011 Disaster Deadline
<b>Oct 1 -</b>	Processing 2011 CRP & Final DCP Payments Begins
<b>Oct 1 -</b>	2012 DCP Signup (no advances)
<b>Oct 10 -</b>	Office Closed – Columbus Day
<b>Oct 11 -</b>	MT Women Stepping Forward Symposium
<b>Oct 18 -</b>	Pesticide Container Recycling in Shelby
<b>Nov 24 -</b>	Office Closed – Thanksgiving Day
<b>Dec 5 -</b>	Deadline to Return Ballots

**\*Toole County FSA Committee meetings are scheduled for the first Thursday of each month beginning at 9:00 A.M. at the FSA Office.**

### Special Accommodations:

Persons with disabilities who require accommodations to attend or participate in any FSA programs should contact Robert Hermance at the Toole County FSA Office at **1-406-434-5234** or the Federal Relay Service at **1-800-877-8339**.

## Disaster Assistance Deadlines

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) Acting Montana Executive Director Dick Deschamps reminds producers about upcoming deadlines for disaster assistance. The sign-up period for crop year 2011 SURE will not begin until after the national average market prices are determined for each respective crop year, which is normally one year after the applicable crop year.

Under the 2008 Farm Bill, in order for producers to be eligible for assistance under the SURE program, ELAP, and TAP, producers must obtain a plan of insurance for each insurable and non-insurable commodity on the farm, excluding grazing. To be eligible for assistance under LFP, producers must obtain either coverage under the pasture, Rangeland, and Forage Rainfall Index pilot program offered through crop insurance, or NAP coverage, or both on their grazing.

Important dates for the five disaster programs are summarized below. Please note that losses must be due to a weather event that occurs on or before Sept. 30, 2011.

- **SURE:** No deadline to file a notice of loss but check with your crop insurance or Noninsured Crop Disaster Program (NAP) policy. Application period for 2009 is closed; application period for 2010 crop year will be announced this fall/winter of 2011; application period for 2011 crop year will be announced in the fall/winter of 2012.
- **LFP:** Application period continues through Jan. 30, 2012
- **LIP/ELAP:** Deadline to file a notice of loss is the earliest of 30 calendar days of when the loss is apparent, or Dec. 29, 2011. Application period continues through Jan. 30, 2012.
- **TAP:** Application period is within 90 days of when loss is apparent.

"We encourage all producers to read the applicable disaster program fact sheets and visit their local FSA county office. The staff can provide additional information such as the deadline for filing a program application or the initial requirement for filing a notice of loss," Deschamps said. Fact sheets for all programs can be found at [www.fsa.usda.gov/mt](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/mt). Additional information regarding the programs is at <http://disaster.fsa.usda.gov>. ♣

Toole County FSA  
1125 Oilfield Ave  
Shelby, MT 59474



**STANDARD RATE  
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